



Mark 12

Mark 12
Tape #8040
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now in our Bibles to the gospel according to Mark, we're in chapter twelve this evening. Jesus has just ran headlong into the religious leaders as He came into the temple and drove out the moneychangers and got rid of those who were commercializing the temple and so they came to Him and they asked Him who gave Him the authority to do those things and by what authority He did them and who gave Him the authority? And He answered with a proposition, I'll answer your question if you'll answer My question. John's baptism, was it of God or was it of man? They reasoned among themselves, If we say it was of God, then He'll say why didn't you believe him and follow him? And if we say, Of man, then the people will turn against us because they're convinced John was a prophet. They said we can't answer you. He said, neither do I answer you. So as He is now still, this is still this confrontation with them, you're still in the midst of this confrontation.

And he began to speak unto them (12:1)

That is, the religious leaders, the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, "He began to speak to them"

by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, set a hedge about it, digged a place for the winevat [or vat actually, in modern English], and he built a tower, he let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country (12:1).

Now in Isaiah chapter five, he uses the parable of a vineyard, the vineyard representing the nation of Israel and how that God planted the finest plant, how He put protection around it, how He did everything to ensure wonderful fruit. Had built the winepress in it, had put the wall around it to protect it. And how that in developing it with the finest vine and all, yet when it came time to bear fruit, it only bore wild grapes. And so the judgment was He was just going to break down the walls, take away the protection, allow the vineyard to just go wild and to be trodden down, it failed to bring forth the fruit that God was seeking (Isaiah 5:1-5).

When Jesus again uses a vineyard in a parable, there is in the study of the scriptures what they call expositional constancy. And that is, when in a parable a vineyard is used of the nation Israel, whenever the vineyard then is used in parabolic form, the expositional constancy would say that it is always the nation of Israel that is being referred to. So as Jesus brings up the vineyard once again, they would immediately identify the nation of Israel as the vineyard. It was let out to husbandmen. They would be the ones who were to nurture and to care for the vineyard in order to ensure that the vineyard brought forth good fruit, their responsibility to keep the vineyard and to develop it, to cultivate it that it might bring forth good fruit.

There was a certain man, planted the vineyard and set the hedge around it; in other words, he established this vineyard. And when the time came that he should reap the fruit of the vineyard, and as a general rule, when you had an absentee owner, he was entitled to fifty percent of the produce that came from the vineyard. And so the time came for the owner to get his fifty percent and it could not be collected until the fifth year.

The time came for the owner to receive the fruit, and so he sent a servant unto the husbandmen to gather for him or to get for him the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, killing some. Having yet therefore one son, his well beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son (12:2-6).

Now of course the servants that were sent were the prophets. And for the most part, the office of the prophet was a hazardous position in Israel. In fact, in Stephen's defense before the council as he got into the rehearsing of their history, he was showing them how that traditionally, their fathers had rejected God's plan. How that when Joseph was rejected by his brothers, they said, We bow down and serve you? Are you

kidding, that'll never happen. And yet they sold him as a slave but still in the end, they did bow down and do obeisance to him according to the dream that he had. But they rejected him the first time around. Second time around, they acknowledged the position that the Lord had placed him in. Moses, when Moses first came to the people, they rejected Moses from ruling over them. And Moses fled and spent forty years in the wilderness. The second time around, they recognized that God had ordained Moses to lead them out of their slavery in Egypt.

As Stephen was getting into it, of course he was building up to Jesus, first time around you've killed Him but He's coming back again. You'll recognize that He's the King of kings and Lord of lords. He's building to that but before he could actually get to the punch line of his message, he was so into how blind they were. He said, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers stoned" (Acts 7:52)? Name a prophet who came out unscathed. Those men who dared to speak God's truth unto the people.

And so here Jesus is pretty much saying the same thing. The prophets that God had sent to the nation of Israel were mistreated, imprisoned, beaten, many of them killed. In the book of Hebrews chapter eleven, it tells us about the suffering of the servants of God, those men of faith, how they were imprisoned, how they were stoned, how they were sawn asunder. Men of whom the world was not worthy. And how they were mistreated by the world and by the nation of Israel. So all of the succession of prophets have been pretty well badly treated by the nation.

God is still desiring fruit and so He said, My beloved Son, I'll send Him, surely they will reverence Him. Now here Jesus puts Himself in a far different category than the prophets. There are always those today that would like to reduce Jesus to one of the prophets. In fact, Mohammed declares that Jesus was just one of the prophets in a succession of prophets. And there are many people that buy into this line. He's just one of a succession of prophets that God had sent. But notice how Jesus puts Himself in a far different category. Finally, He said, "My beloved Son, I will send Him, surely they will reverence Him."

But the husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let's kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours (12:7).

Pilate knew when they brought Jesus before him that it was a conspiracy, that they were jealous of Jesus and fearful that Jesus would replace them. The high priest had said, "Don't you realize that it's necessary that one should die in order that we might save our position in the nation" (John 11:50)? They said, Behold how all of the people are going after Him, we're going to have to do something about this. Or else, they're going to take away our power, our position. And so this basically, Jesus is showing them what they have already determined that He is a threat to them, a danger to them and thus, He had to, in their mind, be destroyed lest they lose their authority and their power and their hold over the people. "This is the heir, let's kill him and then the vineyard will be ours." We'll be able to continue our control and power over the nations.

What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? [The lord of the vineyard is God.] he will come and will destroy the husbandmen [those religious leaders], and he will give the vineyard unto others (12:9).

And then Jesus said,

Have you not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner (12:10):

Or the main cornerstone upon which the building was built or the keystone in the arch. Stone rejected by the builders. And so that was a prophecy concerning Jesus Christ, the stone as promised by Moses, the rock, the stone declared by Daniel, not cut with hands that shall smite the world governments, bringing them down and establishing a kingdom that will never end. The stone though that was rejected by the builders, by the religious leaders of the nation of Israel and it is become and He is become the headstone of the corner.

Now when Peter was standing before the council, these same men and beside him was John and the lame man that all of his life had been lame and was a notable beggar who was at the temple begging from people who went in, and he is standing there with them whole, and the chief council asked him, "By what name or by what power did you do this miracle to this lame man?" [How did you do this? What power, what name?] "And Peter being filled with the Holy Spirit said, You men of Israel, if we are examined this day because of a good deed, if we're being judged, if we're on trial today, we've been arrested, we're here on trial because of the good deed, this lame man is walking," [he basically was saying, Don't you think that's a rather lame charge? The guy's walking, what's your problem?] "But if you really want to know, the God of our fathers

has honored His Son Jesus and it is, he pointed them and he said, This is the stone that was set of nought of you builders” (Acts 4:7-11). Remember that one? He’s cutting right through because they had heard Jesus say, Haven’t you read the scripture? And now Peter’s reminding them of the very same scripture, “The stone which was rejected by the builders has become the chief cornerstone.”

And so they sought to arrest Jesus at that point, but they feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken this parable against them (12:12):

They got the point of the parable. They realized He’s aiming at us. So they got together and they said, We’ve got to do something to take away His popularity among the people. We’ve got to turn the people against Him. We’ve got to get rid of Him. And so they were figuring out how they could catch Him and cause Him to say things that would turn the people against Him.

And so they sent unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words (12:13).

To trap Him, make Him say something that would make Him unpopular.

And when they were come, they said unto him [and listen to this buttery stuff], Master, we know that you are true, and you don’t care for man: and you don’t regard the person of men, but you teach the way of God in truth (12:14):

In other words, we know you’re a straight shooter. We know that you don’t fear man. You speak the truth and you don’t care who it hits. You’re straight. Tell us,

Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not (12:14)?

They figured they got a Catch twenty-two. If He says, it is lawful, you should pay your taxes to Caesar, then the people will all turn against Him. The Roman government, in establishing its rule over the earth, where a nation would work together in cooperation with Rome, the nation was left fairly independent. And during the reign of Herod the great, the nation of Israel was allowed many freedoms because of the favor that Herod the great had with Rome. Upon his death, the nation was divided to his three sons, Archelaus had the southern portion where is Jerusalem, Judaea; Antipas had the area up in the Galilee region; and Philippi had the regions in the far north up towards Syria. Archelaus was, Antipas and Philippi were they worked together with Rome, they did alright. But Archelaus was a poor leader, poor ruler and under him, there came an insurrection against Rome. He wasn’t powerful enough to hold it down and so the portion that Archelaus ruled became a Roman province, that is, they sent a Roman procurator to rule over the area. And there were then Roman soldiers stationed there to keep order and to keep law.

So such was the case there at this time, it was a place that was under the Roman authority and law, and the Romans taxed the people ten percent of their grain, twenty percent of their wine. Really when you look at that, the taxation isn’t bad compared to what we pay. And then they have what they called the Poll tax. That was the tax that you paid for just the right of living. It was reasonable though, it was only a denarius which is a couple of dollars a year.

When people are living in an area where they are provided services by the government, taxation is proper and we are told that we are to pay taxes. Honor to whom honor is due, and tribute or taxes to whom taxes are due. The fact that you can go into the bathroom and turn on a faucet and wash your hands, that running water is provided by the government. There’s got to be some way to pay for it. You can turn on the lights. These things that we enjoy, the benefits that we have, they collect your trash once a week. What a mess things would be if we didn’t have the trash collections, if we didn’t have the sewage plants and all of these things that have been developed by the government to make life easier for us. So there are certain obligations to the government, taxes to whom taxes are due.

But the Jews rebelled against taxes to Rome, especially did they hate this denarius that they had to pay the Poll tax, just the right to live. I have a right to live without paying Rome for that right. And that was the one that galled them especially. So, “Is it lawful for us to pay taxes or not?” You’re a straight shooter, tell us. If Jesus says no, it’s not lawful, that’s an unlawful tax, then they’ll run right down to the Roman headquarters and say we’ve got a tax revolt going on down the street. And they would have had Jesus arrested by the Roman government. So what can He say? Either way He’s wrong.

So Jesus said, Give me a denarius (12:15),

one of your little coins that you pay your poll tax with. Give me a denarius. They gave Him a penny,

interesting He didn't have one, isn't it? For those who say that He wore designer clothes and was so wealthy and all this kind of stuff. Interesting He had to borrow a denarius to make a point. And He held it up to them,

And he said, Whose image is that on there? And of course the image was Caesar's (12:16).

They said that's Caesar. Put the coin back to them and said, If it's Caesar's,

Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, but give to God what is God's (12:16).

In other words, there is a certain obligation that we do have to government but then there is a greater obligation that we have to God. Giving unto God what belongs to God. What belongs to God? Our very existence, our very lives. As Daniel said to Belshazzar in his drunken state, "The very God in whose hand your breath is, you have not glorified." And so we should give to God what is God's, the glory, the praise, the respect, the reverence, the honor, because He is our Creator and we really are His.

Then came some of the Sadducees (12:18),

The high priest was a Sadducee and most of the priesthood were Sadducees. These were men who did not really follow the oral traditions as did the Pharisees. They weren't interested in the Mishnah or the oral traditions. In fact, they pretty much held only to the Pentateuch, the first five books. They even had questions on the rest of the books of the Old Testament but they held that the first five books were inspired. And because in the first five books, the books of the Pentateuch, there was no mention of resurrection, they believed that when you died, that was it, it's all over. They did not believe in life after death, they did not believe in angels, they did not believe in spirits, they were the humanists, the naturalists of the day. Interesting that they would be the religious leaders, they were the ones who were the husbandmen who were to be developing the fruit in the vineyard, the religious leaders. But here they were rationalists, humanists. And so they came to Jesus, and they made up what I'm certain is a hypothetical case, unlikely that this would actually happen.

Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and he leaves his wife behind him, and leaves no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother (12:19).

That's the Mosaic law. Actually it was before the Mosaic law, you go back in the book of Genesis and Levi, you remember his son married Tamar, he died and so the brother took Tamar and he died and so Levi have one more son but he thought, Oh my, she's already killed two of my, don't know that I want my third son, and so it was back before the law, this situation with Levi. And then you also have the case of, there was another case, Onan who refused to raise up a seed to his dead brother. But it was incorporated in the Mosaic law and it's a very interesting law there, actually if a man died his brother was to take his wife and the first child would be named after the dead brother to keep his family name alive in Israel. If the man did not want to marry her, he did have an out, he could come before the judges and he could present his case. He could say, Look, this was my brother's wife, he died, I know I have an obligation to marry her but I don't want to marry her. Gave my brother such, I don't want to be tied to that. And so he would take off his sandal and hand it to her. And she would spit in his face. It's there under the law, look it up. And then he was known as the man from whom the shoe was loosed. Sort of a dirty word. He wouldn't take care of family obligations, he wouldn't honor his dead brother. Deuteronomy chapter twenty-five, you'll find this law that they are referring to. So they made up this hypothetical case now.

There's a man and he died and so the brother took the wife and he died. The next brother took the wife and he died, next brother took the wife, until the seven brothers, the story of seven brothers. They all had her as a wife, finally the seventh died. No children (12:20-22).

In the resurrection, who gets her (12:23)?

I read somewhere and this is awful, that there was a tombstone and on it, it said, Side by side, here lie my wife and I. And when on that judgment morn when the skies are filled with Gabriel's horn, if she stands up I'm lying still. In the resurrection, whose wife will she be? You might say, Who wants her? They're trying to create a case in which shows the ludicrousness of the idea of resurrection. In other words, if there's resurrection of the dead there's going to be all kinds of problems. It's sort of ludicrous, this idea of resurrection. And they're trying to point that out.

And so Jesus answering said unto them, Do you not therefore err, because you do not know the scriptures, nor the power of God (12:24)?

They erred in two points. You don't know the scriptures. Number two, you don't know the power of God.

For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven (12:25).

Marriage today is ordained by God, a relationship in which two persons enter into the deepest, the most intimate and the most abiding relationship that we can experience on the human level, the two become one. It's ordained by God. It is a beautiful, close bond. God has intended that through marriage children be brought into the world into a loving, rich, secure environment. But man has messed things up. But when you have a good marriage, there's nothing better. It's the closest thing probably to heaven on earth you can experience, a good marriage. And there are many people, I've actually had people say, If he can't be my husband in heaven I don't want to go to heaven. That's sort of foolish because consider the alternative. He won't be your husband there. But I won't be happy. You do err because you don't know the scriptures and you don't know the power of God. The relationships that we will have in heaven will exceed even those of our marriage relationships here. Heaven is going to be such a glorious place. And just "eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard," we've only gotten just glimpses, little glimpses here and there. But it's so far beyond anything we'd ever hope for or dreamed or could imagine. And so Jesus said, "You do err, we'll be like the angels who neither marry nor are given in marriage."

And as touching the dead (12:26),

That's answering your question, but let's go on to your issue. Touching the dead that they rise, you don't believe that the dead rise but touching the dead

that they do rise: have you not read in the book of Moses (12:26),

Again that's all they would accept, the first five books.

how in the bush God spoke unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living: therefore you greatly err. [So He really put them down.] And so the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well (12:26-28),

They thought, that's heavy, didn't think of that one.

they asked him, Which is the first commandment of all (12:28)?

That is, first in importance. What's the most important commandment of all?

And Jesus answered him, The first of all of the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: [The Shema there in Deuteronomy.] And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: and this is the first or primary commandment. The second is like it, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There are no other commandments greater than these (12:29-31).

These are the greatest. First, your relationship with God, loving Him supremely, loving Him with everything you have—all thy heart, soul, mind and strength, your whole being. Second, your relationship with each other, loving your neighbor as yourself. The first table of the law does deal with the first four commandments, with our relationship with God. But basically they can be summed up in loving God fully and completely. The second six commandments have to do with our relationship with our fellow man, they can be summed up with just love your neighbor as yourself.

And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, you have said the truth [that's good]: for there is one God; and there is none other beside he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices (12:32,33).

That's more meaningful than all of your burnt offerings or sacrifices. This is what, you've got the heart of it.

And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, You're not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that dared to ask him any question (12:34).

That sort of ended their questioning. But then Jesus went on to question them.

And he said, while he taught there in the temple, How say the scribes that Messiah is the son of David (12:35)?

The word "Christ" is the Greek word the anointed and the word "Meshiac" in the Hebrew is again, the anointed. They both mean the anointed. And the reference is to the fact that kings when they were crowned

as kings were anointed. They would pour the oil over the head, the anointing oil, being anointed as king. So the Messiah would be God's anointed king. And thus in the Greek, the word "Christos" is the anointed and thus acknowledging again or it is the equivalent of the Hebrew "Meshiac" or Messiah. It is not His name and many people think His name is Christ. His name is Jesus but He is the Messiah, the anointed one. And so David in speaking of the Messiah in Psalm 110,

For David himself said by the Holy Spirit (12:36),

Notice Jesus attributes the words of David to the anointing of the Holy Spirit. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16), we are told by Paul when he wrote to Timothy. When Peter was quoting from the Psalms, he said, David by the mouth of the Holy Spirit spake saying, so the acknowledging of David being anointed by the Holy Spirit and his words being inspired words from God. So how is it that David himself by the Holy Spirit said,

The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool (12:36).

So David called the Messiah his Lord. Then how is it that the Messiah is called the Son of David? If He is the Son of David, how is it that David called Him Lord? In that society, it was a patriarch type of society where the father ruled until he died. Jacob ruled over the family until his death. That was just the way the culture was. And no father would ever call his son Lord, that was just so opposite to their whole social order, to their culture. So Jesus is proposing a real problem to them, the Messiah was known, one of His names is Son of David. But how is it that David by the Holy Spirit called Him Lord? My Lord.

David therefore himself called him Lord; and whence is he then his son? [It stumped them] And the common people were glad. [Yes, nail them again.] And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, who love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces (12:37,38),

They love to wear these colorful robes, they love to sow on to the robe the broad phylacteries, the little tassels indicating their spirituality. They love to be recognized by the robes they wore as religious men. And some of the fancy types of robes and the colorful robes indicating the order that they have within the religious order itself. They love it. Jesus said, Beware of them, they love to go with these robes, the long clothing and they love the salutations in the marketplace as they walk through the marketplace with their robes that show how righteous they are. They love people saying Rabbi, Rabbi. And they love

the chief seats in the synagogues (12:39),

Those seats that were down in the front that faced the people so that everyone could see them sitting there in front of the arch in which the Torah was kept. They loved that position, recognition as spiritual leaders.

Several years ago I spoke in a church in Sweden and the platform was as high as the balcony. And on the platform were all these huge throne-like chairs and the elders of the church all sat in these chairs looking out at the congregation. It was sort of uncomfortable, you looked right in the balcony, right at the people in the balcony there, others were looking up at you. but it's much like the synagogue where the scribes would sit in the front looking at the people. Here are the erect and nice spiritual men and they love it. They love

the uppermost rooms at the feasts (12:39):

the more important places, they love the seating order at the feast, to be seated in the places of honor. Remember Jesus said when you're invited to a feast, don't look for that high place but look for the low place. Better to sit in the low place and have them come and say come on up here, you belong up here; rather than sit in the high place and say, oops, we're sorry but you're sitting in the wrong place, you belong down the line.

Which devour widows' houses (12:40),

They go around taking advantage of people. They write to the little widows on social security these letters of the tremendous emergency that their ministries are facing and if you don't send money in right away, we don't know what we're going to do, how we will survive, so please use the enclosed envelope and make your check as generous as possible. Save this ministry that Satan is trying to destroy. We're trusting in you to save us. And that's just their problem, they're not trusting the Lord. But here they go around,

and for a pretence they make long prayers (12:40):

Jesus said that they think they will be heard for their much speaking, so they were repetitions, their prayers were repetitious. He talks about vain repetition in prayer. You don't talk to a friend in a vain

repetition of sentences, your friends will think you're crazy if you talk to them like many people talk to God. When you talk to a friend, you think about what you're saying, it's thought out, it makes sense. And thus when we pray, we are to think out our prayers. We're to speak to God as we're speaking to a friend. But here these for a pretense will make these long prayers and Jesus said,

they will receive greater damnation (12:40).

Taking advantage of the people spiritually, putting on this pretense of spirituality, receiving a greater condemnation. There are degrees of punishment in hell, we'll get to that when we get to Luke chapter twelve.

Jesus was with His disciples and they were near the treasury, and they were beholding how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich putting in their money (12:41).

Notice they were noticing how they did it, how you give. And you can give with great ostentation and I'm sure it was probably an exaggeration but He said, When you give, don't be like the Pharisees who sound a trumpet before them. They have the band going in front of them blaring away in the trumpets and holding out your gift and dropping it in the treasury, drawing attention to yourself. He probably was speaking in a hyperbole but yet here they were observing how they were giving, with just the great pomp and the wealthy people coming and giving.

And there came a certain poor little widow, she threw in two mites, which make a farthing (12:42).

A farthing is a quarter of a cent so a mite is a quarter of a farthing or an eighth of a cent, so she gave in, she put in about a quarter of a cent.

But Jesus called to him his disciples, and He said unto them, I tell you the truth, this poor little widow has cast in more than all of them which have cast into the treasury (12:43):

All of these wealthy people, everything they put in, she has given more.

For all they did cast in of their abundance (12:44);

It didn't cost them, they have more than enough but she has cast in of her want.

she cast in all that she had, even all of her living (12:44).

So really it isn't the amount that you give to the Lord, it's the sacrifice that's involved. That's where real giving comes in when it becomes a sacrifice, when you're giving of your substance to the Lord. More than just giving out of the abundance that you have, true sacrificial giving is that which the Lord recognized as more than all the rest.

Brings us to chapter thirteen so read it over. When I read through the chapter, as I read through I first of all try to get in my mind the various events of the chapter, generally into my mind. And then as I continue to read it, those passages that seem to be a little difficult I will look up commentaries on those passages. I will use Strong's or Young's concordance and I will look up the Greek or the Hebrew as the case may be to maybe get a better understanding of a verse. And then I will ask myself, what does this say to me? How does this apply to my life today? Which of these scriptures really speak to me about my relationship with God, my relationship with Jesus Christ. What does it tell me about God? What does it tell me about Jesus? And hopefully, because we are only going one chapter a week, I would hope that daily, you would read chapter thirteen, that you'll try and put it in order in your mind, the sequence of events, put it in your mind in order so that you could list off the order of events of chapter thirteen. And then what has spoken to you the most? How does this apply to you today? What does it say to you? And really seek to on your own be fed by the Spirit of God, gaining insight and understanding into the scriptures as the Spirit will become your personal tutor as Jesus promised, so that you might grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.